

*North Atlantic Treaty*

The adoption of this resolution had been preceded by a lengthy debate which made it abundantly clear that although the people of Canada had—in your generation, Mr. Speaker, and mine—participated in two victorious wars, they realized at what terrible cost in human life, human suffering and anguish, to say nothing of the cost in material wealth, these victories had been and were being won, and that the establishment of an effective organization for the maintenance of international peace and security was of vital importance to Canada, and, indeed, to the future well-being of mankind.

The conference was held, and the representatives of more than fifty nations affirmed their determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, reaffirmed their faith in the dignity and the worth of the human person, and agreed to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours; to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and, moreover, to refrain in international relations from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

This great charter was solemnly signed by the delegations of fifty nations, and each one took it back to his respective constitutional authorities for ratification. It was ratified by those fifty nations in the most solemn manner in which international obligations can be made binding. Actual hostilities having come to an end in the meantime, a new hope spread its rosy radiance over most of the civilized world.

The charter was not, however, a perfect instrument, and some of us did have grounds for misgivings. I remember listening with mixed feelings to the closing address of Mr. Gromyko, in which he stated that the charter in itself could not be a guarantee that its provisions would be carried out and ensure the maintenance of peace, but that to achieve this important and noble task it would be necessary to have united and co-ordinated action by the most powerful military powers of the world. He went on to say that it would be necessary for all members to try to settle all disputes by peaceful means. These words had an ominous sound after we had listened earlier in the conference to the statements of Mr. Molotov about the great part—and it was indeed a great part—that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had taken in saving the civilization of Europe,

and about the great strength of their armies and their intention to maintain them at great strength. Mr. Gromyko went on to say:

Under the charter, the members of the international organization obligate themselves to achieve peaceful settlements of the disputes. Let us hope that this aim will be fully realized.

We were not unmindful of the fact that each of the great powers had been given a right of veto on the operation of the principal organ of the international body, and it would seem that any one of them could prevent it from being effective unless, if it were so disposed, it were allowed to have its own way in every regard.

Unfortunately these misgivings were soon to be converted into positive anxieties. When the general assembly met for the first time in London in January of 1946 I remember whistling to keep up our courage and pointing out that these obligations had been undertaken in the most solemn way in which international obligations could be contracted, and saying:

It is true we have also agreed that, on most important matters, the decisions of the security council shall be made by an affirmative vote of seven members, including the concurring votes of the permanent members, and we have called that the "veto" right of the great powers, and there are many to whom it has given some concern. But is not the charter itself, its purposes and its principles, solemnly accepted and ratified by those great powers, a firm pledge on which each of us can implicitly rely that they will use their privileged position only as a sacred trust for the whole of mankind?

I think events have shown that it was rather a vain hope. Speaking for the Canadian delegation at the second part of that assembly in October, 1946, I felt constrained to point out that the security council had not proceeded to complete its organization, and I did so on behalf of the Canadian delegation in the following words:

Canada therefore urges that the security council and the military staff committee go ahead with all possible speed in the constructive work of negotiating the special agreements and of organizing the military and economic measures of enforcement. It appears to us that it would be in the interest of all members of the United Nations to see the security council equipped and ready in fact to enforce proper decisions for the maintenance of world peace and also to see serious consideration given to the reduction of national armaments so that the productive capacity of the world thus conserved may be used for improving the living conditions of all peoples.

There was no very enthusiastic response to that suggestion from our friends of eastern Europe. A month later, speaking again for the delegation, I said:

The Canadian delegation feels that it would be premature to call in question in this first session of the general assembly the rule of unanimity set out in article 27. What we do call in question is the manner, or perhaps rather the number of cases and the kind of cases, in which that rule of unanimity has already been applied.